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RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 3353
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4723
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0625
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL CALCUTTA PRIORITY 2894
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHMFIS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L KATHMANDU 003165

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/06/2016

TAGS: PGOV SENV MARR NP

SUBJECT: NEPAL'S NATIONAL PARKS MAY GET UPGRADE IN PROTECTION

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d).

Poachers and Pachyderms

¶1. (SBU) Barna Bahadur Thapa, Warden of the Koshi Tappu Wildlife Reserve in south-eastern Nepal, told Emboff on December 3 that poaching was a big problem in the park. Thapa stressed that most poaching was for food (wild buffalo, fish, or birds) or shelter (trees or thatch grass). Under Nepali law, the warden of a park has the authority to imprison for up to 15 years, or fine up to USD 1,350, poachers in a national park or reserve. Thapa said there were, at last count, 158 wild buffalo in the park, along with thousands of migratory birds. Thapa stated that the reserve was an important migration corridor for wild elephants, and that a few elephants per year transited through the park. He stressed that, as more humans moved into the areas around the reserve, the chances of wild elephants inadvertently injuring people increased. Thapa suggested that the Government of Nepal provide a trust fund for compensation of families who are harmed by wild elephants.

Perimeter Protection in the Park

¶2. (C) Warden Thapa said that the Nepal Army (NA) had only been able to effectively patrol the eastern edge of the reserve because they were currently short-handed. Smaller NA units that had been posted on the other three borders had been destroyed by the Maoists. Thapa was hopeful that the NA would provide more protection to the reserve in the near future. In a separate meeting on the same day, Major Purushottam KC, Officer-In-Charge of the NA unit that guards the reserve, told Emboff that three more company-size units (150 soldiers) would likely be added for park protection in the next five or six months. KC expected that the new camps would be on the north, west, and south sides of the park, allowing the NA to effectively patrol and protect the entire perimeter of the park against poaching.

Comment

¶3. (C) After years of not being able to effectively protect Nepal's national parks and reserves because of the Maoist

insurgency, the Government of Nepal (GON) and the NA now seem to be taking wildlife protection seriously in Koshi Tappu. Following a recent spate of killings of endangered rhinos in Chitwan National Park, the GON has publicly declared its intention to boost security in that park as well. Nepal's rich flora and fauna represent a significant element of Nepal's potentially lucrative tourism industry.

MORIARTY